(c) whether Government would consider making 197 accessible to all phone users in the country;

(d) the reasons for not giving this service to the entire nation;

(e) whether in the long-term such a non-connectivity affects the commercial viability of MTNLand BSNL; and

(f) the steps proposed to rectify this anomaly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir.

197 is basically a Directory Enquiry Number for fixed line service of MTNL/BSNL. Access to this service has been provided from MTNL/ BSNL Mobile Networks.

Further, BSNL has signed separate agreements with 53 private cellular phone operators to permit access to Directory information services operated by BSNL.

Directory Enquiry Number 197 of MTNL, Delhi, is accessible to cellular subscribers of Airtel,'Hutch and IDEA.

(b) The connectivity of MTNL and BSNL subscribers is not affected.

(c) No such proposal is under consideration at present.

(d) The cellular phone operators are to have commercial arrangement with other operators including BSNL/MTNL for accessing the service provided by them.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Does not arise in view of (e) above.

Mobile services in Assam

1709. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that mobile services are not satisfactorily functioning in Cachar district of Assam, particularly in Silchar;

(b) if so, whether any steps are being taken to achieve the satisfactory performance level in mobile services;

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether it is also a fact that prepaid card of BSNL is not available in Assam, more particularly in Cachar district; and

(e) whether any steps are being taken to overcome sufferings of the customers for non-availability of pre-paid cards?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) to (c) There are 4 (Four) licensed operators for providing mobile services in Assam Telecome Circle Services Area. Out of these, only 2 (Two) operators namely M/s Reliance Telecome Ltd. and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL) have started their services in Assam. The other 2 (Two) operators namely M/s Bharti Cellular Ltd. and M/s Dishnet DSL Ltd. have not started their services as yet.

In Cachar district, mobile service of BSNL is only available. M/s Reliance have not covered this district so far. The mobile service of BSNL in Cachar including Silchar is working satisfactorily. However, congestion has been observed at some places during busy hour due to constraint in mobile network capacity. Action has been taken by BSNL to augment its mobile network capacity in Cachar district including Silchar by 16,800 lines in 2005 to ensure good quality of service.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. Pre-paid mobile services has not been started by BSNL in Assam so far. The permission for providing pre-paid mobile services in Assam on experimental basis was given for three months in the month of November, 2004.

Demand of IT professionals

1710. SHRI THANGA TAMIL SELVAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that demand for Indian IT professionals in the global market has come down in the recent years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government would assess the requirement of IT professionals in India and abroad on annual basis so as to warn universities